United Nations S/PV.4375

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4375th meeting

Tuesday, 18 September 2001, 5.45 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Levitte	(France)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Amin
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Touré
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchinsky
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Hume

Agenda

Consideration of the draft report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-53917 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 5.45 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Consideration of the draft report of the Security Council to the General Assembly

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now proceed to the consideration of its annual report to the General Assembly, the draft of which has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Members of the Council have before them the draft report of the Security Council to the General Assembly for the period from 16 June 2000 to 15 June 2001, as circulated by the Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Political Affairs on 27 August 2001, and a corrigendum thereto.

I should like to express my great appreciation and that of the Security Council to the Secretariat for the work it has undertaken in preparing this report.

I shall now call on the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs to make an explanatory statement.

Mr. Fall (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs) (*spoke in French*): The draft annual report of the Security Council for the period 16 June 2000 to 15 June 2001, to be submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of Article 24, paragraph 3, and Article 15, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter, has been prepared by the Secretariat in line with the revised format agreed upon by the Security Council in 1974 and further revised in 1985, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997 and 1998.

The format of the draft report before the Council provides a guide to the activities of the Council in a concise manner. It should be noted that, in addition to the extensive coverage provided in part VI on the work of the subsidiary organs of the Council, the annual reports of the sanctions Committees are to be found in appendix XIII of the report, in accordance with the note by the President of the Security Council of 30 October 1998, document S/1998/1016. Further, pursuant to the understanding reached at the Council's consultations of the whole on 30 November 1998, statements to the press made by the President following consultations of the whole of the Council have been annexed to the monthly assessments prepared by the former Presidents at their discretion.

As the President has pointed out, the draft report was circulated by the Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Political Affairs on 27 August 2001 to the current members of the Security Council and to the members whose terms of office expired on 31 December 2000, for review and comments, if any. A corrigendum containing changes requested by two Council members and an addition made by the Secretariat is also before the Council.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): We have decided today to go along with the adoption of this draft report, but we would like to place on record that we are doing so with reluctance and reservations. We feel obliged to place this on record because, when this draft report is discussed in the General Assembly, we will probably be very critical of it and it is only fair — before anyone asks us why, if we were so critical, we did not speak out at the point of adoption — that we speak out now. In doing so, we would like to stress that we are not criticizing any members of the Secretariat or, indeed, any of our colleagues. We know that a lot of hard work and effort have gone into the preparation of this draft report and we commend those who have put in the effort.

Unfortunately for us, however, we find that the final product is not a satisfactory one. In terms of illuminating the General Assembly on the actual work that takes place in the Council, I suspect that it fails to achieve that objective. We are not quite sure why this is the case. It is possibly because we may not have had sufficient time to discuss this draft report in depth. It could also possibly be because this draft report is the result of various decisions taken over the past 35 years, often without questioning.

Just to cite one example, this draft report, as you said, Sir, is for the period from 16 June 2000 to 15 June 2001. This divides two presidencies in half. We are not sure what the logic behind this is, but apparently this decision was taken 35 years ago and has not been revised since then.

Equally important, in the most recent decision we took, we agreed that this report should be more analytical. I think that, if we judge it by that criterion, clearly there is room for improvement.

We mentioned some of these reservations when we discussed this in the Council, but, as you said, Mr. President, the train had already left the station this year, and therefore we agreed to stay aboard.

We would also like to make it very clear, however, that we believe that the time has come to review this report and the manner in which the Security Council reports to the General Assembly. This is, after all, a key point that is mentioned in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Charter, which states that

> "The Security Council shall submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the General Assembly for its consideration."

Indeed, whenever we carry out our Charter responsibilities, we should do so as well as possible.

At the same time, over the years the report has grown in length. Based on a rough estimate of $600 a page, this draft report will cost us $350,340. I think that, if we are going to spend that kind of money, it is only fair that we should review the product that we are obtaining.

We are, of course, very pleased that the members of the Council have agreed to refer this matter to the informal working group of the Security Council concerning the Council's documentation and other procedural questions. We hope that this informal working group will meet soon to start reviewing ways of improving the report. Since this informal working group does not meet very often, I believe that the sooner it meets, the better it would be for our work.

Finally, since the report is intended for the members of the General Assembly, we hope that in this year's debate in the Assembly, its members will provide us feedback on both its content and format, and that we will be able to take on board this feedback in preparing next year's report.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to this agenda item, I, too, believe that for the record, and for the purpose of inclusion in next year's report, we should not limit ourselves to hearing an explanatory statement from the Secretariat — from Mr. Fall — but that members of the Council should also make comments on the subject.

Several circumstances are mentioned in the introduction that were taken into account with a view to improving the product. As we said in consultations, and as Ambassador Mahbubani has noted, it says, for instance, that in 1997 new measures were adopted with a view to making future annual reports more analytical. That goal has not been achieved, at least insofar as the last three reports are concerned.

On the other hand, certain Council members have on numerous occasions met with the Assembly's working group. Both this year and last year, it was said that the report must be improved and made more useful. Those of us who are permanent members of the Assembly as well as non-permanent members of the Council bear an additional responsibility in this regard.

I am convinced that we can and must enhance its contents, so as to describe better the work of the Council and also to ensure that the report can better be utilized. As has been said, and as was noted in consultations, in no way should these comments prevent us from acknowledging the valuable work done by the Secretariat in compiling information and organizing it in keeping with the instructions and guidelines that the Council has laid down.

However, the report still is designed to be informational — to be a compendium of data that can easily be consulted, especially if we use modern technology. What we need is a report that is more flexible and more appealing: a report that can provide an accurate reflection of what is accomplished here, and one that would make it possible for other members of the Organization better to understand the Council's relationship with other bodies of the United Nations system.

We therefore support the efforts that are being made. Proposals will surely be made in this respect. We will participate in the debate in the Assembly, and we hope to submit alternatives in a timely fashion that will receive the support of the other members of the Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): As the representatives of missions that are seated in the Chamber, but not at the table, will have understood, the Council had a constructive discussion during its consultations on ways of enhancing the usefulness of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly.

I think that it is good to review, from time to time, procedures that year after year become routine. The Council is not the only United Nations body to be

affected by routine, but it does wish, whenever possible, to enhance its working methods. One example is the transparency of our meetings. Indeed, we are trying to increase the number of Council meetings that are open to all Members of the United Nations. This is the case for the troop-contributing countries. We adopted resolution 1353 (2001) and were able to implement it this month, through two lengthy meetings featuring dialogue and consultation with the troop-contributing countries, on Sierra Leone and on Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Let me give a third example, though there are certainly more. We have begun a debate at the ambassadorial level on the annual report that our Council submits to the Assembly. The working group will meet in a few days, so that — as Ambassador Mahbubani said — this year, when the train leaves, it will do so in a spirit of reform, with the goal of enhancing the preparation of the report and maximizing its usefulness to the General Assembly.

May I take that the draft report, as corrected, is adopted by the Council?

There being no objection, it is so decided.

This decision will be reflected in a note by the President of the Security Council, to be issued in document S/2001/876.

The Security Council has thus concluded its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.